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ARTICLE 6 OF THE CONVENTION

Procedures and resource requirements for the designation of a climate change day

Note by the secretariat*

Summary

This note deals with approaches to designating a climate change day at international and national levels, and provides information on procedures and resource requirements. It suggests careful consideration of the potential costs and constraints imposed by the designation of such a day, given the uncertainty of value added in the context of the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention and availability of resources.

At the seventeenth session of the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), Parties may wish to take note of the information contained in this document, review the issues for consideration, and agree whether any further action is necessary.

* This document was submitted late to enable the secretariat to include all relevant inputs, which would not have been possible within the deadline.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Mandate

1. The Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA), at its eighth session, requested the secretariat "to explore the possibility of establishing a United Nations Climate Change Day to promote awareness of climate change issues at the national and international levels" (FCCC/SBSTA/1998/6, para. 37 (h)).

2. At its fourteenth and subsequent sessions, the SBSTA also requested the secretariat to provide information on options concerning the designation of such a day (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/2, para. 27 (e)), on the procedures for designating it and on the resource requirements for its implementation (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/8, para. 45 (i)) based on further consultations with relevant international organizations (FCCC/SBSTA/2002/6, para. 55 (e)).

B. Scope of the note

3. In response to the above mandate, this note presents possible alternative approaches for designating a climate change day, provides information on the related procedures and resource requirements, and raises issues for consideration.

C. Possible action by the SBSTA

4. The SBSTA may wish to take note of the information contained in this document, review the issues for consideration, and agree on further action.

II. ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

5. Drawing upon preliminary findings (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/6, paras. 22–23), and after further consultations with relevant organizations, the secretariat identified four approaches for designating a climate change day. They vary in nature, scope, decision-making process and resource implications.

Approach I: United Nations Climate Change Day

6. A United Nations day implies an activity decided by the General Assembly and implemented by Members States and the United Nations Secretariat, as designated in a resolution. Currently 41 United Nations days, based on General Assembly decisions, exist.[1]

7. Each year, the General Assembly of the United Nations adopts a resolution[2] entitled "Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind". So far, these resolutions have mainly reaffirmed the importance of climate change and the need for international cooperation and partnership to address the issue, and emphasize the commitment of the international community to implementing the Convention and its Protocol.

8. It could be envisaged that the Conference of the Parties might forward a recommendation to the United Nations General Assembly that a day be designated to be observed globally, every year, as United Nations Climate Change Day. The declaration of such a day would be issued through an additional General Assembly resolution, which would include an invitation to Member States to promote and organize activities at the national level in accordance with the objective and goal of the Convention

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1 http://www.un.org/events/ref41.htm

2 For example, A/RES/56/199.

and its Protocol. The resolution would also request the United Nations Secretariat to assist Member States in coordinating and organizing their national activities.

9. The UNFCCC secretariat would, to the extent possible and taking into account the financial constraints in the United Nations system, draw upon the experience and existing means of the Department of Public Information of the United Nations (UN-DPI) for support. Related activities would include developing conceptual proposals for an awareness campaign, establishing and maintaining a dedicated web site, media liaison to ensure worldwide coverage, and producing information kits (containing, for example, a news release, videos, posters, a message from the Secretary-General of the United Nations, and a message from the Executive Secretary of the UNFCCC). The coordination of these activities would require, as a minimum, a full-time Information Officer and related support in the UNFCCC secretariat. On this basis, the annual budget required by the secretariat can be estimated as a minimum of US$ 200,000, excluding production costs. Depending on the scope of activities and support provided by the secretariat, more resources might be needed to foster and implement an effective annual celebration of a worldwide United Nations Climate Change Day.

10. At the national level, governments would be invited to celebrate the event in practical ways. These might include campaigns for "climate friendly" activities, encouraging awareness among children by holding competitions and awarding prizes, holding scientific and technical conferences and meetings to discuss climate change, producing radio and television programmes and publishing articles highlighting the subject, issuing brochures, pamphlets, stamps, posters, calendars and so on, and involving non-governmental organizations in these activities and encouraging them to take their own initiatives.

11. Experience of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) in organizing the World Environment Day indicates that such a programme by a national government would cost at least US$ 300,000. This estimate includes the indirect costs arising from preparatory activities as well as the direct costs relating to the events taking place on the day of the celebration. UNEP produces annual reports on the activities and events being organized for the celebration of the World Environment Day.[3]

Approach II: International Climate Change Day

12. The Conference of the Parties (COP), as the supreme body of the Convention, could consider adopting a decision to designate a day every year to devote to raising awareness of climate change. Most of the responsibilities for such a day would probably rest with individual Parties, with the secretariat playing a supporting role.

13. The budget for activities at the national level would be comparable to that for approach I. The resources required from the UNFCCC secretariat, however, would be more than for approach I, because it would not enjoy the same level of support from the UN-DPI in planning and coordinating the celebration.

14. The COP might request Parties to provide information on their related activities, in order to assess the impact and cost-effectiveness of such a day.

Approach III: Climate change as an area of focus in an existing United Nations Day

15. In 1989 and 1991, climate change was the main theme of the World Environment Day ("Global Warming; Global Warning" and "Climate Change. Need for Global Partnership", respectively). UNEP has reiterated its offer to do this again (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/8, para. 45 (i)), and although climate change

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[3] Global Activity Report on World Environment Day, UNEP.

could not be selected as the 2003 theme, consultations are under way on the possibility of taking up this option in a future year (FCCC/SBSTA/2002/6, para. 55 (e)).

16. In some years, climate change could also be incorporated as an area of focus in one of the 41 annual days already observed within the United Nations system, such as the International Day for Biological Diversity (May 22) or World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought (June 17).

17. This approach would build upon existing commitments of resources and would increase information exchange on climate change between different sectors of society. It would also enhance practical cooperation between conventions in accordance with the task of the Joint Liaison Group (JLG), as endorsed by the SBSTA at its fourteenth session (FCCC/SBSTA/2001/2, para. 42).

Approach IV: National climate change awareness days

18. Article 6 of the Convention invites Parties to promote and facilitate the development and implementation of public awareness programmes on climate change and its effects. The SBSTA, at its sixteenth session, reaffirmed the need for a work programme that would, inter alia, facilitate the implementation of Article 6 by Parties, and acknowledged that public awareness activities could be included in such a work programme (FCCC/SBSTA/2002/6, para. 55 (g)).

19. When considering further the proposed work programme at its seventeenth session (FCCC/SBSTA/2002/6, para. 55 (k)), the SBSTA may wish to include the organization by Parties of climate change awareness days as possible elements of their national programmes for implementing the Convention.

20. Irrespective of an international calendar, Parties could formally or informally designate their own day(s) at the national or regional level, with climate change as the main theme or as an area of focus within of a broader theme, which would be in line with a country-driven approach and take into account national circumstances and capacities. This might also encourage Parties to share experience and good practices, as well as information material and structures that could be recycled and adapted to other Parties' needs.

21. The role of the secretariat in this context would be limited to its existing information and outreach activities as well as its other activities in support of the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention. It could also encompass the compilation of activity reports based on information contained in national communications, and facilitation of networking activities.

III. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

22. The effective organization of a climate change day will depend on the level of effort and resources mobilized for this purpose. It will also depend on cooperation between Parties, and their willingness to make it a success, national circumstances and capacities permitting. The secretariat would like to draw the attention of the SBSTA to the following elements for its consideration:

(a) Cost-effectiveness should be an important guiding element in agreeing on further action in this area; however, in all approaches "effectiveness" is difficult to measure. Given the large amount of publicity and press coverage already enjoyed by the topic of climate change, would the designation of a recurring international climate change day (approaches I and II) significantly increase the current level of public awareness? Would it be possible to assess the added value of such a day in this context? Or could resources be used more effectively for other aspects of the work programme for Article 6 of the Convention?

(b) Are Parties prepared to engage in national activities on an annual basis and to contribute financial support for a recurring international campaign? Could Parties sustain this effort year after year to ensure that this day is appropriately recognized in an already congested international calendar?

(c) Are Parties prepared to cover the secretariat annual expenses for planning and coordinating specific activities in support of a recurring international climate change day; even the supplementary funds required to support Article 6 activities in the current biennium are not yet available?

23. Given the uncertainty of value added and availability of resources, Parties are invited to consider whether the designation of such a day would be useful and cost-effective, or whether other approaches are more effective in the context of the implementation of Article 6 of the Convention.